

# **Maryland Commission for Women**

## **Annual Planning Meeting**

**September 12, 2014**

**Miller Senate Office Building, Conference West 1**

### **Attending:**

#### **Commissioners:**

Dr. Kathleen White, Chair  
Lee Bachu, Vice Chair  
Wandra Ashley-Williams  
Dr. Homayara Aziz  
Patricia Cornish  
Lillian Cruz  
Nicole Drew  
Lorna Forde  
Helen Holton  
Michele Hughes  
Velvet Johnson  
Varsha Mathur

Ginger Miller  
Anita Riley  
Toni Sandridge  
Roseanna Vogt

#### **Guests:**

The Hon. Delores Kelley  
The Hon. Gloria Lawlah  
Bonnie Ariano  
Amanda Rodriguez

#### **Staff:**

Judith Vaughan-Prather  
Crystal Young

#### **Absent:**

Sylvia Butler  
Susan Elgin  
Cara Tenenbaum  
Betsy Ramirez  
Debbie Risper  
Diane Williams

### **Summary of Discussion**

#### **I. Introductions and Overview of the Day**

Chair Kathleen White called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and welcomed all in attendance. She invited the commissioners to introduce themselves to one another, to share what they believe are important issues confronting Maryland's women and girls, and to mention the committee on which they plan to serve this year.

Dr. White then reviewed the goals for the planning meeting and the process for the work to be accomplished at this meeting.

#### **Welcome:**

On behalf of DHR Secretary Ted Dallas, his Special Assistant Bonnie Ariano brought welcoming remarks. Secretary Dallas was sorry that he could not attend in person because he believes strongly that women should have a voice in government. He provided the financial support for this planning meeting because he wants the MCW to succeed. Ms. Ariano noted that all but one of his department heads are women, and they are strong women. She noted how important the work of the MCW is and said that Secretary Dallas wants to see the MCW reach its full potential. She emphasized the importance of attendance and participation at MCW meetings. The MCW's enabling legislation provides that any commissioner who fails to attend at least 50% of the scheduled meetings will have resigned her post. It was pointed out that the schedule of meetings is in the binders for today's meeting and commissioners were asked to mark their calendars. It was also noted that while the law requires attendance for at least 50% of the meetings, 100% attendance is expected.

Dr. White thanked the Secretary for his support of this event, and thanked Ms. Ariano for her participation and long-standing support of the MCW. She presented her a certificate of appreciation from the MCW.

### **Greetings and Charge to Action**

Senator Delores Kelley, who was kind enough to sponsor the MCW's use of this beautiful facility today, greeted the commissioners and described the history of the MCW. She noted an issue currently in the news relating to the paucity of medical facilities equipped to adequately handle victims of sexual assault – because many lack the equipment and the training for use of “rape kits” to gather evidence while treating victims. She said that one in every five women are victims of sexual assault at some time in their lives, and that we are newly recognizing the special problems on college campuses. This issue needs further investigation in our state. In addition, Senator Kelley is on a panel investigating the issue of women as caregivers. She noted that many women already in their 60s are providing care for parents in their 80s. Senator Kelley recommended that the MCW select one issue per year and develop a policy result to work towards.

Dr. White thanked the Senator for her remarks and for her leadership on women's issues in the Maryland legislature. She presented her a certificate of appreciation from the MCW.

## **II. The MCW at Work**

### **A. Orientation to the Planning Process**

#### **Mandate and Mission:**

Dr. White noted that Senator Kelley has laid a pathway for the MCW and that commissioners should ensure that the social, political and economic status of the women of our state is better because there is a Maryland Commission for Women. She reviewed the MCW legislative mandate and its Mission Statement, noting that at the end of their terms, commissioners must ask themselves, “Did we serve as change agents?”

#### **Commissioner Roles and Responsibilities:**

Dr. White reviewed the Commissioners roles and responsibilities, asking each commissioner to serve as the “eyes and ears” of the MCW in the community, to serve on an MCW committee and to participate actively. She noted that attendance at MCW meetings is expected to be “in person” and asked that committee chairs come to meetings prepared with written reports.

## **B. MCW Operations and Support**

### **MCW Bylaws**

Vice Chair Lee Bachu reviewed the current MCW Bylaws, and reported that commissioner Williams has agreed to chair a committee to review the bylaws and make recommendations for changes. She reminded the commissioners that each committee chair will be expected to submit a written report of the committee's activities before each MCW meeting.

### **Friends of the MCW**

Dr. White described the non-profit Friends of the MCW and said that we need more current and past commissioners serving as members to help with fundraising activities so that the MCW is not just asking the Friends for funding but is also helping to generate funds. Commissioner Forde suggested that if there is a meeting of Commissions for Women from around the state, fundraising and 501(c) 3 organizing might be a good topic of discussion.

## **C. Consideration of Current Commitments**

Dr. White reviewed the MCW's major activities and events including the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame and the Women of Tomorrow Awards. She reminded the commissioners that the Maryland Women's Heritage Center is holding its annual fundraiser on Sunday, September 28. Copies of the invitations are included in the binders for today's meeting, as are descriptions of each of the above events. Commissioner Holton serves on the Board of Directors for the Heritage Center and described how far the Center has come from its origination just 10 years ago to its current status occupying a physical space. Plans are in the making for the Center to eventually own its own space. She quoted one of the founders of the center: "We add her story to our story to make history," and encouraged everyone to attend the September 28 event and to bring 10 friends.

Additional MCW annual activities include participation in the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) and support of its legislative platform. Its annual conference to develop the platform is scheduled for November 17.

The MCW is required by its enabling legislation to submit an annual report. A copy of the 2013 report is in today's meeting binder. Committee chairs each must write a report of their committee's activities throughout the year.

Dr. White, Commissioner Cornish and Executive Director Vaughan-Prather represented the MCW at the annual conference of the National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) in July. Commissioners were encouraged to join NACW and support its work on behalf of CFWs nationwide by becoming Associate Members. Membership applications were included in the binders for today's meeting.

The MCW has traditionally sponsored a “roundtable” inviting the local CFWs in the state to share their projects and strategies. Dr. White plans to schedule that meeting in November of this year.

The MCW has twice published reports of research on the Status of Women in Maryland, but the last one was based on data from the 2000 Census. It would be a major project to undertake research using current data. However, through the U.S. State Department funded American Council for International Education the MCW office will host a “professional fellow” from the Eastern European nation of Georgia, October 9 – 31. One of the projects on which she will be asked to work is the development of an updated report.

Commissioner Vogt reported on the MCW’s participation in the annual “Women Moving Forward” conference for women returning from incarceration. Some of the issues addressed include regaining custody of children, financial literacy, returning to the workforce, reuniting with family, etc. In the past, MCW commissioners have led workshops. Commissioners Johnson and Bachu participated last year. For this year’s conference, the MCW is contributing gift bags with promotional items that might be of use to the participants. Commissioner Vogt will send an announcement of the October 11 event to the staff who will send it out to the commissioners.

Dr. White noted that, while it may not be possible for the MCW to cover the registration fee for every program, it is important for the MCW to be represented at events relating to women’s issues around the state. She encouraged commissioners to keep the MCW advised of and to attend events in their home jurisdictions. Commissioners who are officially representing the MCW at events and meetings may be reimbursed for mileage and parking.

Dr. White suggested that the December meeting of the MCW be held as an “open house” at the new MCW office in Rockville.

#### **D. The MCW Strategic Plan**

Copies of the 2013 – 2014 MCW Strategic Plan, developed at last year’s planning meeting, were included in the binders. A template for the 2014 – 2015 plan was developed as well. Dr. White asked commissioners to review the plan, and to consider what each committee will contribute. Commissioner Johnson noted that the MCW should tie its priorities to legislation and to policy advocacy.

## **Commission to Commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution**

Secretary of Aging and former Maryland Senator Gloria Lawlah is also chair of the Maryland commission charged with developing the celebration of Maryland's role in the campaign to give women the right to vote. The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, granting suffrage to American women will be in the year 2020.

Secretary Lawlah began her remarks by noting that the work of the MCW is still very important. "Just when we thought we'd made great progress . . . Here comes the domestic violence situation" (in the NFL) "which just shows us that there is still much work to be done." She said that both the Governor and the Lt. Governor are very strong on this issue, and said, "We know that the MCW is a force for change."

The MCW is represented on the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendments anniversary commission by both Dr. White and Commissioner Williams. Already the commission has had a number of accomplishments. Senator Klausmeier sponsored the bill to create the Commission and it has already formed its committees, and created a website and data base. On June 9, it planted a marker to launch the historical trail marking the path of the 1913 march for women's suffrage from New York to Washington, through Maryland. The commission is in the process of scheduling its meetings for the next six years as it plans for the culminating events in 2020.

The MCW discussed how it might support this work. The commemoration commission is seeking stories from anyone who participated in those historic events and the campaign for women's right to vote. Commissioners were encouraged to ask their mothers and grandmothers if they have any information to share. Secretary Lawlah said that "We are gathering history so that we may teach history." In addition, the MCW could post a link on its webpage to the website for the commemoration.

Dr. White thanked Secretary Lawlah for her inspiring remarks and for her inspired service to our state, including her leadership of this important commission. She presented her a certificate of appreciation from the MCW.

## **II. Committee Membership and Strategic Plan**

The Commission's standing committees are specified in its bylaws. Commissioners committed to work on the committees as follows:

### ***Executive Committee:***

Dr. Kathleen White, Chair  
Lee Bachu, Vice Chair  
Wandra Ashley-Williams, Secretary  
Dr. Homayara Aziz  
Ginger Miller

Lorna Forde and Debbie Risper  
Varsha Mathur and Amanda Rodriquez  
Velvet Johnson  
Lillian Cruz  
Helen Holton

***Education & Outreach:***

Ginger Miller, Chair  
Varsha Mathur  
Nicole Drew  
Betsy Ramirez  
Amanda Rodriguez

***Subcommittee: Women of Tomorrow:***

Lorna Forde, Co-chair  
Debbie Risper, Co-chair  
Lee Bachu

***Subcommittee: Maryland Women's Hall of Fame:***

Varsha Mathur, Co-chair  
Amanda Rodriguez, Co-chair  
Lee Bachu  
Nicole Drew

***Legislation and Public Policy:***

Velvet Johnson, Chair  
Anita Riley  
Michele Hughes  
Lillian Cruz  
Wandra Ashley-Williams

Pat Cornish  
Nicole Drew  
Toni Sandridge  
Amanda Rodriguez

***Public Relations and Communications:***

Lillian Cruz, Chair  
Betsy Ramirez  
Nicole Drew

***Maryland Women's Heritage Center:***

Helen Holton, Chair  
Anita Riley  
Pat Cornish

***Health and Wellness:***

Dr. Homayara Aziz, Chair  
Helen Holton  
Lorna Forde  
Lillian Cruz

The Bylaws also permit the establishment of ad hoc committees, and commissioners committed to work on the following committee:

***Status of Incarcerated Women:***

Roseanna Vogt  
Wandra Ashley-Williams

## **Priority Issues for Strategic Plan of Action:**

After considerable discussion, the Commission set for itself three priority areas of concern for its 2014 – 2015 plan of action:

### ***Violence Against Women***, including:

- Human Trafficking
- Rape Kits in Emergency Medical Facilities
- Intimate Partner Violence

### ***Economic Equity for Women***, including:

- Pay Equity
- Financial Literacy
- Job Discrimination
- Paid Leave
- Increased Minimum Wage
- Financial Literacy for Girls
- STEM Education and Careers
- Child Care

### ***Health and Wellness for Women***, including:

- HIV/AIDS in Senior Population
- Chronic Disease
- Mental Wellness
- Obesity

The Commissioners then identified several **strategies for addressing these issues**:

- Increasing activity in Annapolis – legislative and policy advocacy
- Partnerships with other organizations public and private
- Information Sharing

Before the MCW's October 16 meeting, each committee is asked to meet, consider how these three priority areas fit into its area of responsibility, and develop a work plan for how it will address one or more of the priority areas of concern.

In the binders for today's meeting is the template for the current year's Strategic Plan, but that plan cannot be formed until the committees have set their agendas. In section 5 of the binders is a committee worksheet. Committee chairs are asked to convene a meeting or conference call with their committee members and complete the 2014 – 2015 Committee Work Plan. Each committee chair is asked to submit the proposed work plan to the MCW office by October 9, so that it may be presented to the MCW at its October 16 meeting.

Commissioners will need to bring their binders to that meeting as the major goal of the October 16 meeting will be the completion of the Strategic Plan for 2014 – 2015.

### **III. Review Goals for the Planning Meeting**

The goals for the planning meeting were to:

1. Develop consensus for and commitment to an agenda for the year
2. Engage commissioners as a team in planning and carrying out that agenda
3. Develop work plans for each committee with specific goals and activities
4. Agree on the responsibilities of each commissioner in accomplishing the agenda for the year

Dr. White noted, and the commissioners agreed that the commission had identified its priorities for this year and established its committees with members and chairs. Now, the committees are to develop their proposed specific plans of action and send them to Dr. White and the MCW Executive Director so that they may be acted upon at the next MCW meeting.

Dr. White thanked all in attendance for dedicating so much of their time and expertise to this process and commended the commissioners for all their very hard work.